

St Andrews-raised music engineer Olga launches national campaign for shared parental pay ^[1]

Author: Alexander, Michael

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EXCERPTS

Olga Fitzroy, 35, has launched The Campaign for Parental Pay Equality petition which aims to gather public support for a change to the eligibility criteria.

Once complete it will be presented to Justine Greening MP, Minister for Women and Equalities and Margot James MP, Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Corporate Responsibility.

Both the Music Producers Guild, of which FitzRoy is a member and an MPG Award winner, and UK Music are supporting the campaign as she says the current regulations are a “barrier to women maintaining freelance careers in the music industries.”

“My son was born in 2015 and I was looking forward to sharing the childcare with my husband, as the new Shared Parental Leave regulations had just come into force,” said former Lawhead Primary and Madras College pupil Olga, who lives in London with her husband Simon and 21-month-old son Lucas.

“When it came to filling in the forms I realised that I wasn’t eligible because I was self-employed.

“I could get Maternity Allowance but couldn’t share this with my husband.

“As a self-employed woman I have no job-security, other than the loyalty of my clients, and none of the protections that employees have when they go on maternity leave.

“I was expected to take 39 weeks off with only 10 “Keeping In Touch” days to maintain client relationships.

“Anyone who runs their own business will appreciate that you can’t just shut up shop and expect to be back where you were in nine months’ time.”

Olga, who did work experience at Dundee’s Seagate Studios as a student before landing a job at Beatles-producer Sir George Martin’s AIR Studios, said 43% of people in the creative industries are self-employed and right now they are only entitled to Maternity Allowance – and only if they are mothers.

She added: “The current system of Maternity Allowance for the self-employed places the entire burden of childcare onto the mother and offers no financial support for self-employed fathers or same-sex partners wanting to share childcare.

“We would like to see ShPP implemented for self-employed parents, as it would allow them more flexibility to successfully run their businesses without claiming any more money from the government than the mothers are currently entitled to.”

Olga said the UK Government’s own Taylor Review on Employment recommends that the self-employed get ShPP, yet she says the UK Government is “dragging its heels”.

She added: “Our research shows that the rigid system of Maternity Allowance is detrimental to families and businesses, and in 2017 we cannot expect all the childcare in a family to be automatically done by women.

“With our petition we hope to keep up the pressure on government to change the law – after all we’re not asking for more money, just for both parents to be able to access the £140 a week currently given to mothers.”

Parental Pay Equality will join international pressure group, Pregnant Then Screwed in a “March of the Mummies” on October 31 from Trafalgar Square to Westminster, where they will put five key demands to the Government:

- Increase the time limit to raise a maternity discrimination tribunal claim from three months to (at least) six months
- Require companies to report on how many flexible working requests are made and how many are granted.
- Give fathers access to six weeks non-transferable paternity leave paid at 90% of salary.

- Give the self-employed access to Statutory Shared Parental Pay
- Subsidise childcare from six months old, rather than three years

Olga's petition can be found at <https://platform.organise.org.uk/campaigns/shared-parental-pay-petition> [3])

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